

Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Volume 13

Article 11

4-1-1998

Letters to the Editor

Walt Reinhart

Sarah A. Bir

Aram Berard

Follow this and additional works at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations>

Recommended Citation

Reinhart, Walt; Bir, Sarah A.; and Berard, Aram (1998) "Letters to the Editor," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 13, Article 11.

Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol13/iss1/11>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor:

I read with interest the Fall 1997 issue of *Conversations* ("Hiring for Mission"). As a lay teacher in the Jesuit system, I thought to myself—what a great time to find a straightforward mission statement about the Society of Jesus, or at a minimum a defining statement about Jesuit identity and purpose. I quickly skimmed through the issue, and then went through it more slowly—all to no avail. It seems that there is no Jesuit mission presented in the journal, and most likely there is no single Jesuit mission statement that fits all the campuses.

Reading the articles gives one a sense of urgency, as the number of Jesuits on campus continues to decline. Lay

faculty, administrators, and staff constitute the major force on campus, and they are expected to carry on the mission. But what is the mission? Each of the twenty-eight Jesuit colleges and universities, I'd guess, has a mission statement that refers to Jesuit tradition and beliefs. That is perhaps part of the problem. Each school wants to create its own identity and not be tied into a single statement. While this is understandable, it does not help solve the problem. A second stumbling block may be that, in light of "political correctness," it is difficult, if not impossible, to define a mission that might stress God, family, or other old-fashioned beliefs that are usually

associated with the Jesuit tradition. Perhaps it is time to put aside differences, take a stand and advance a mission statement that indicates a strong belief in God underlying a commitment to working for the benefit of all mankind. Under such a broad umbrella each institution could develop and/or maintain its own mission statement. Yet such a broad mission would provide definitive guidance.

Problems with defining the mission and values of our institutions also impede our efforts to educate the "whole student" (see *Conversations*, Spring 1997). Lacking a definitive statement, we have a sense of urgency, but our plans seem con-

stantly to be frustrated by a pervasive desire to please all concerned. Perhaps if we had a single mission regarding Jesuit tradition, our efforts to educate the whole student, and to educate men and women for others would have a clearer focus.

Walt Reinhart
Department of Finance
Loyola College in Maryland

Editor:

I am writing in response to the Fall 1997 issue, on "Hiring for Mission." I am a student at Seattle University and work closely with many faculty and staff members. I value the diversity at Seattle University.

Making applicants aware of the Jesuit mission is in keeping with the Jesuit tradition and helps to keep it alive. Staff and faculty do not necessarily need to believe in the mission personally, but need to be aware that students choose a Jesuit institution for a spiritual, as well as a quality, education. Hiring only for mission, however, can lead to problems. A highly qualified applicant could be turned down for a position because of his or

her personal beliefs, or someone could lie and get the position. Value-oriented hiring is more realistic in today's society. A Jesuit institution should be accepting and understanding without compromising its beliefs. Is that not what this is really all about?

I know that at Seattle University students, faculty and staff are encouraged to get involved with volunteer and community work. Are we not supposed to be accepting, regardless of beliefs, and help our fellow man? We are all supposed to be inclusive, yet we are excluding by hiring for mission.

Sarah A. Bir
Student
Seattle University

In the Fall 1997 issue of *Conversations* ("Hiring for Mission"), John J. Pauly asks the key question about the future of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the United States:

Should we require students to attend Mass or Litany or Rosary, or ask faculty to begin each class with prayer? (p. 26)

The question is asked sarcastically by Pauly, but the answer to it will determine whether or not our institutions of higher learning will remain distinctively Jesuit as we prepare for the celebration of the five-hundredth anniversary of the Society of Jesus. If we answer the question affirmatively, we will restore a distinctively Jesuit character to our campuses; if

we say "no," or, with Pauly, dismiss the question offhandedly, our distinctively Jesuit character will continue to fade away.

If Ignatius of Loyola were living in America today, he would insist on the daily offering of the sacrifice of Christ at the altar and on daily meditation on the mysteries of Christ's life. How we respond to John Pauly's question will determine whether we fade away or gear up to meet the challenges in our nation and the world as we enter a new millennium. All we need is the courage to say "yes."

Rev. Aram Berard, S.J.
Saint Paul's Rectory
Reading, Pennsylvania

MEMBERS
OF THE
NATIONAL
SEMINAR ON JESUIT
HIGHER EDUCATION

Hamilton E. Cochrane teaches
English at Canisius College,
Buffalo, New York.

Peter J. Fennessy, S.J., is rector of
the Jesuit Community at
John Carroll University,
Cleveland, Ohio.

Joseph J. Hayden, S.J., is rector of
the Jesuit Community at Wheeling
Jesuit College, Wheeling,
West Virginia, where he also
teaches psychology.

Cynthia Langham teaches com-
munications studies at the
University of Detroit Mercy,
Detroit, Michigan.

Joseph M. McShane, S.J., is dean
of Fordham College of Fordham
University, New York, New York,
where he also teaches theology.

John W. Paulberg, S.J., chairman of
the National Seminar on Jesuit
Higher Education, is director of
the Institute of Jesuit Sources at
Saint Louis University,
St. Louis, Missouri.

Jane Purcell Rues teaches in and
chairs the occupational therapy
education program at Rockhurst
College, Kansas City, Missouri.

William M. Shea teaches theology
at Saint Louis University,
St. Louis, Missouri.

Ronald Slepitz is vice president
for student affairs at Xavier
University, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Wendy M. Wright teaches
theology at Creighton University,
Omaha, Nebraska.

